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U. S. Department of Agriculture

THE GARDEN CALENDAR!

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, Tuesday, April 4, 1933, broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

--ooOoo--

Hello, Folks: From my mail and from my talks with the people here and in other places, I know that both farm and city people are trying awfully hard to keep up their living appearances, even though they have to tug and pull like everything to make both ends meet. I have so many requests for information on how to keep home surroundings attractive at a small cash cost that I am going to talk on that point today.

Some of the people who want to know about the inexpensive ways of keeping up the home surroundings give one reason for their interest while some give another. A number of people say that a nice looking home and garden is their last line of defense against the depression; that they'll never give that up as long as they can still carry on. Other people -- maybe they are the more practical among us -- feel that fixing up the home grounds and buildings is one way to offset some of the deflation in sale and loan values that has hit farm and city real estate. Of course, they realize that no amount of beautifying a place will hold its value at the point where it was 3 years ago, or two years ago, or even one year ago. But they do say that neglect to make repairs or improvements to the grounds and plantings will cost more in the way of reduced values for sale or for securing loans than simple repairs and garden improvements will cost them in cash, so they consider a certain amount of improvement about the home as a good investment. For instance, one of these people was telling me about a neighbor who had applied for a loan on his home. His house was in good condition except that it needed some minor repairs and a coat or two of paint. He had neglected the lawn and the shrubery plantings. The loan agent turned down the application, partly because of the poor appearance of the place.

But the man who told me that incident and dozens of other men in the same neighborhood are making every effort to improve their homes and grounds, even in this year of cash shortage. He was asking me for pointers on how to make improvements on the grounds at small expense. So many other town and county folks have asked me the same question, as I said before, that I am going to try to give some answers today. All right, here we go.

Take the matter of trees and shrubbery around your homes. You can often go into the woods and the pastures on your places and bring in the native trees and shrubs and plant them around your house. If you can't afford to buy lawnsseed, then take your spade and cut sod from some fence-row or pasture and patch up the bare places in your lawn. You folks who live in the South can dig plantings or "sets" of carpet grass or Bermuda grass and set them in your lawn. Many of you can get hedge cuttings or extra ornamental plants from some of your neighbors. You might even go so far as to establish a community plant exchange and everybody in the neighborhood trade surplus plants. I wish I could tell you how to get a good grade of housepaint without cost, but for certain buildings a good coat or two of whitewash will be an improvement over no covering at all.

(over)

By planting the native plants about your homes you are sure of having those that are adapted to your climate. When you are bringing the wild plants from the woods you want to be sure to provide the proper soil conditions. For example, Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Mountain laurel and certain of the wild honeysuckles grow in an acid soil. The proper method is to bring as much soil as you can around the roots of each plant but supplement this with additional soil hauled from the place where the plants grew. This will insure the right soil conditions for a time at least.

Another problem is to get fertilizers. Many of us will not have the money with which to buy fertilizers for use on our lawns or gardens this year. For my lawn I am mixing screened garden loam with droppings from my poultry house and spreading a thin layer over my lawn and working it down smooth with the back of a steel rake. I expect to scatter a little grass seed over the whole lawn, not over a dollar's worth altogether, then borrow a lawn roller from one of my neighbors and give my lawn a good rolling. And folks, don't overlook the value of the annual flowering plants for planting around your homes where you can't afford to put in expensive shrubbery. Take about ten or twelve of the old-fashioned annuals such as Zinnias, periwinkles, petunias, four-o'clocks, ageratum, annual larkspur, poppies, marigolds, cosmos, and castor-oil beans. You can plant morning glories and gourds for climbers and get a fine effect at very little cost for seeds.

Property values have undergone a tremendous deflation during the past year or two. Real estate people tell me that the run-down and neglected appearance of the homes and their surroundings has something to do with their decreased appraisal value when it comes to renewing mortgages or getting new loans. If you can afford to do a reasonable amount of painting and repair work that will help wonderfully, but you can go a long way toward keeping up appearances by simply planting native plants and the annual flowering plants about your homes.
